

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for tracking medical products, each of the medical products having a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tag uniquely associated therewith, the apparatus comprising:

5 a casing comprising a compartment for receiving one or more medical products therein;
a reader for reading the RFID tags associated with the medical products in the compartment; and

a processor coupled to the reader for receiving and processing readings of the RFID tags in the compartment to identify the medical products in the compartment.

10 2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the processor identifies a medical product removed from the compartment by determining a difference between readings of the RFID tags in the compartment taken before and after the medical product is removed from the compartment.

15 3. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the processor verifies that the medical product removed from the compartment is authorized to be removed by comparing a product identifier associated with the RFID tag of the removed medical product to a product identifier of a medical product authorized to be removed from the compartment.

20 4. The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the product identifier comprises at least one of a product name, a product serial number, a product lot number, and a patient identifier.

5. The apparatus of claim 3, further comprising a display coupled to the processor, and wherein the processor displays a mismatch notification on the display when the processor detects a mismatch between the product identifier read from the RFID tag of the removed medical product and the product identifier of the medical product authorized to be removed.

5

6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the mismatch notification comprises the product identifier read from the RFID tag of the removed medical product and the product identifier of the medical authorized to be removed.

7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the apparatus includes a single reader for reading the RFID tags of all medical products in the casing.

8. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the casing comprises a plurality of compartments, and wherein the reader comprises a plurality of readers for reading the RFID tags of medical products in respective compartments.

9. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising an input device coupled to the processor for identifying a patient to be associated with one or more medical products being removed from the compartment.

10. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a return compartment for returning unused medical products, and a reader for reading an RFID tag of any returned medical product

placed in the return compartment, the processor coupled to the reader for identifying the returned medical product.

11. A method for monitoring medical products stored in a medication-dispensing unit,
5 each of the medical products comprising a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tag uniquely associated therewith, the method comprising:

removing a medical product from the dispensing unit;

identifying the medical product removed from the dispensing unit by detecting removal
of the RFID tag associated with the medical product removed from the dispensing unit; and

10 verifying that the medical product removed from the dispensing unit is authorized to be removed from the dispensing unit.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the verifying step comprises comparing a
product name identified by the RFID tag removed from the dispensing unit with a product name
authorized to be removed from the dispensing unit.

13. The method of claim 11, further comprising identifying a patient, and wherein the
verifying step further comprises comparing a product name identified by the RFID tag removed
from the dispensing unit with a list of medical products scheduled for delivery to the identified
20 patient.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein the steps of identifying the medical product
removed from the dispensing unit further comprises:

reading the RFID tags of the medical products in the dispensing unit before the medical product is removed from the dispensing unit;

reading the RFID tags of the medical products in the dispensing unit after the medical product is removed from the dispensing unit; and

5 determining a difference between the readings of the RFID tags taken before and after the medical product is removed from the dispensing unit to identify the medical product removed.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the verifying step comprises comparing a product name identified by the RFID tag removed from the dispensing unit with a product name
10 authorized to be removed from the dispensing unit.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the product name of the medical product removed from the dispensing unit is obtained by reading the RFID tags before the medical product is removed from the dispensing unit.

17. The method of claim 14, further comprising identifying a patient, and wherein the verifying step further comprises comparing a product name identified by the RFID tag removed from the dispensing unit with a list of medical products scheduled for deliver to the identified patient.

20 18. The method of claim 17, wherein the product name of the medical product removed from the dispensing unit is obtained by reading the RFID tags before the medical product is removed from the dispensing unit.

19. The method of claim 11, further comprising:

returning a medical product to the dispensing unit; and

reading an RFID tag associated with the medical product to identify the returned medical

5 product.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising determining an intended patient for

the returned medical product, and sending a notice that the intended patient did not receive the
returned medical product.

21. A method for monitoring removal of medical products stored in a medication-
dispensing unit, each of the medical products comprising a Radio Frequency Identification
(RFID) tag uniquely associated therewith, the method comprising:

reading the RFID tags of the medical products in the dispensing unit before removing one
or more medical products from the dispensing unit;

removing one or more medical products from the dispensing unit;

reading the RFID tags of the medical products in the dispensing unit after the one or more
medical products are removed from the dispensing unit; and

determining a difference between the readings of the RFID tags taken before and after the

20 one or more medical products are removed from the dispensing unit to identify the one or more
medical products removed from the dispensing unit.

22. The method of claim 21, further comprising verifying that the one or more medical products removed from the dispensing unit are authorized to be removed from the dispensing unit.

5 23. The method of claim 22, wherein the verifying step comprises comparing a product name identified by an RFID tag removed from the dispensing unit with a product name authorized to be removed from the dispensing unit.

10 24. The method of claim 22, further comprising identifying a patient, and wherein the verifying step further comprises comparing a product name identified by the RFID tag removed from the dispensing unit with a list of medical products scheduled for deliver to the identified patient.

15 25. The method of claim 21, further comprising transmitting an inventory notice from the dispensing unit when a quantity of RFID tags stored within the dispensing unit falls below a threshold.

20 26. The method of claim 21, further comprising:
returning a medical product to the dispensing unit;
reading the RFID tags of the medical products in the dispensing unit after the medical product is returned to the dispensing unit; and

determining a difference between the readings of the RFID tags taken before and after the medical products are returned to the dispensing unit to identify the medical product returned to the dispensing unit.

- 5 27. The method of claim 26, further comprising determining an intended patient for the returned medical product, and sending a notice that the intended patient did not receive the returned medical product.